

Testimony in Support of S.B. 3, An Act Requiring The Board Of Regents For Higher Education To Develop Seminar Programs For Small Businesses

Dear Chairs Elliott and Slap, Vice Chairs Turco and Flexer, Ranking Members Haines and Witkos, and Members of the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement:

My name is Tioné Hoeckner and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for **S.B. 3 - An Act Requiring The Board Of Regents For Higher Education To Develop Seminar Programs For Small Businesses**. This bill would give small businesses free seminars on electronic commerce, social media, and virtual currency allowing them to stay resilient during future COVID-19 surges and be competitive in an increasingly digitized marketplace.

Small businesses are the backbone of the Connecticut economy, accounting for 99.4% of all Connecticut businesses and employing 48.4% of all Connecticut employees, according to the Small Business Administration's 2021 Small Business Profiles for States. Connecticut's economic success is dependent on small businesses' success, and it is more important than ever for them to have an online presence. Since 2014, worldwide e-commerce sales have skyrocketed from \$1.336 trillion to \$4.938 trillion in 2021. Moreover, social media has become a vital marketing tool for small businesses to thrive in the modern economy and compete in e-commerce. As it becomes clear that COVID-19 has become an endemic virus, small businesses need the resources to establish an online presence to mitigate fallout from future outbreaks when people are less willing to go to stores in-person.

This bill is crucial right now because of the challenges small businesses faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a Connecticut Small Business Development Center survey of Connecticut small businesses, 75% of the respondents experienced at least a 25% decline in revenue from 2019 to 2020. This survey also found that half of the small businesses surveyed were not confident that their business would return to profitability a year out from the survey was taken in January of 2021. As e-commerce becomes a crucial part of business, it is necessary to support small businesses as they navigate returning from the pandemic in an increasingly digitized world. These seminars would help get small businesses back on track, and in turn they will support entire communities.

In conclusion, I urge you to provide Connecticut small businesses with the support that they need and deserve. To compete in the modern economy and endure future COVID-19 outbreaks, small businesses need the resources and knowledge to create an online presence. S.B. 3 provides those vital resources to small businesses whose tight budget would make it difficult to otherwise pay for a private course on these topics. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the

Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement to give a much needed boost to Connecticut's economy and its small businesses.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Tioné Hoeckner
New Haven, CT